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REVIEWS

THE RIDDLES OF THE EXETER BOOK. Edited with Introduction, Notes and Glossary by Frederick Tupper, Jr., Professor of the English Language and Literature in the University of Vermont. (Albion Series of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poetry). Boston: Ginn & Co. 1910.

There has been no edition hitherto of the *Riddles of the Exeter Book* with full critical apparatus, and to supply this want was perhaps the finest opportunity left for the Anglo-Saxon editor of poetical texts. Professor Tupper has risen in the fullest measure to the height of this opportunity and has given us one of the very best editions that we have of any Anglo-Saxon text. As far as the sources and solutions of the riddles are concerned, he has prepared himself for his task by a more thorough investigation of the whole field of early riddle literature than any one else who has ever dealt with the collection in the Exeter Book, so that his judgment of the work of his predecessors in this field will carry the weight that pertains to an exceptional familiarity with the methods of the riddle-makers of earlier ages. How exceptional that familiarity is has been sufficiently manifest from the studies in this species of literature which he has published during the past three or four years in *Modern Language Notes* and other technical journals.

The Introduction begins with a discussion of the different kinds of riddles from both the historical and logical points of view and includes next a review of the various riddle-collections of the early Middle Ages which may be regarded as offering originals or analogues to the riddles of the Exeter Book. This review embraces, of course, collections like those of Symphosius, Aldhelm, and the rest, but it also takes account of the folk-riddles, whose relation to the riddles of the Exeter Book it is the special merit of Professor Tupper to have emphasized. The editor now passes to the discussion of the much-vexed question of the authorship of the Anglo-Saxon riddles and comes to the conclusion that they are nearly all the work of one author but that this author is not Cynewulf. To be sure, in *Modern Language Notes* for December, 1910, Professor Tupper has since

changed his position on this question, owing to an ingenious interpretation of the First Riddle which he has lighted on as a logogriph of Cynewulf's name. This interpretation is a very plausible one, but in any event the evidences of substantial unity of authorship which the editor has collected in the present book are convincing. Still further, there can be no doubt that he is right in his contention that the Anglo-Saxon riddles are *Kunsträtsel* with a large alloy of popular elements. Indeed, they are much less dependent on earlier literary enigmas than has been sometimes maintained.

A good many of the riddles are comparatively easy of solution. Indeed, some of the best of them are hardly more than descriptive poems with the title left off. For instance, if Shelley's *Cloud* were printed without a title, we should have such a "riddle" as two of the Storm pieces of the Exeter Book, and the analogy between Suckling's *Candle* with its *double entente* and the Twenty-Sixth Riddle is even closer.

Not only the easier riddles, however, but the majority of those that are more difficult found satisfactory solutions now more than fifty years ago at the hands of Franz Dietrich. Most of Dietrich's solutions have stood the test of time; on the other hand, the active discussion of the riddles that has gone on in recent decades has been rather barren—perhaps, unavoidably so. In the case of the more difficult pieces, all the possibilities of suggestion have been exhausted, so that the task of the editor has consisted mainly in a choice of interpretations. In the notes to each riddle Professor Tupper weighs these various interpretations in the minutest details and with exemplary learning and judgment. Furthermore, he has himself offered new solutions for a certain number of riddles, with results that are most satisfactory, perhaps, in the case of the concluding riddle of the collection, No. 95 (The Moon).

The Notes to which I have referred, besides the discussion of solutions, contain ample observations on textual and linguistic matters. Equally thorough are the Bibliography and the Glossary, the latter being of particular interest, owing to a large number of *hapax legomena* and words relating to objects of daily life that occur in these riddles.

In the preparation of his text, Dr. Tupper has incidentally used to advantage the beautiful transcript (neglected by all previous editors) of the Exeter Book made in 1831-2 by Robert Chambers, at a time when some words of the original MS. were more legible than now. With a wise conservatism, which our Teutonic brethren—especially Professor Moritz Trautman—might well imitate, he sticks to the manuscript, except where it is manifestly corrupt, not considering himself at liberty to emend whenever the readings of this manuscript fail to accord with some preconceived interpretation. Readers of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* will be familiar with Professor Tupper's recent paper exposing the absurdity of these arbitrary methods, in which confident assumption is offered as a substitute for a moderate degree of acumen.

We cannot leave the present admirable work without adding our tribute to the interest of the Anglo-Saxon Riddles and expressing our gratitude to their author (wherever his spirit may now be) for having had the courage to turn his back on the whole host of saints, whose inhuman egotism was enough to have arrested the progress of Christianity indefinitely, and to sing, though in this humble form, of art, of storms, of birds, of the implements of war and of peace, of the ways of a man with a maid—in fine, of an astonishing variety of subjects which, standing close to the “primal sanities” of life, must ever be of interest to the untrammelled human mind. J. DOUGLAS BRUCE.

FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE. By Richard Burton. Boston: Little, Brown, & Company. 1909.

HYLAS AND OTHER POEMS. By Edwin Preston Dargan. Boston: Richard G. Badger.

Though alike in outward appearance, these two slender volumes of recent poetry have little in common. Each, to be sure, is from the pen of a college professor; each is chiefly lyrical; and in each we find the same careful workmanship resulting in perfection of form. Otherwise the two books furnish a striking contrast.

Professor Dargan here confines the exercise of his poetic